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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to both replicate and expand upon previous research on self-concept formation in selected ethnic and socio-economic status (SES) groups, and to assess its relationship with specific academically related variables. Subjects were 785 students drawn from large urban and small city schools. The Soares and Soares Self Concept Scales was used to obtain five measures of self perception. The results showed that those students with the highest self-concepts were most likely to be male, white, having parents with a high SES, and having a high level of vocational aspiration. It was concluded that these results agree with the many studies which have found a positive relationship between SES, race, and ego concepts. However, these results do not support the findings of some of the more recent studies which report higher ego concepts among disadvantaged children. (Author/BW)

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SELF PERCEPTION, SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS AND RELATED VARIABLES IN BLACK, MEXICAN AMERICAN AND WHITE YOUTHS

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Abstract

This study was designed to both replicate and expand upon previous research on self concept formation in selected ethnic and SES groups and to assess its relationship with specific academically related variables.

The Soares and Soares self concept scale was used to obtain five measures of self perception in 785 students drawn from large urban and small city schools. The results showed that those students with the highest self concepts were most likely to be male, white, having parents with a high SES, and having a high level of vocational aspiration. These results agree with the many studies which have found a positive relationship between SES, race, and ego concepts, but do not support the findings of some of the more recent studies which report higher ego concepts for disadvantaged children.

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Introduction

The question of the relationship between ego concept socio-economic status (SES), and ethnic group membership has attracted unusual amounts of attention primarily because of conflicting findings. Many researchers have suggested that children of the lower social classes do actually reflect the negative self image that society holds for them. (Erickson, 1963; Witty, 1967). Other investigators suggest that SES is not a significant variable in self-perception (Coleman, 1966). However, some of the more recent studies by Soares and Soares, 1969; Trowbridge, 1972; and Powers, et. al. 1971) indicate that by some criteria, the disadvantaged child may indeed hold a higher self perception than his counterpart in the middle and upper classes. Why these conflicting findings have been obtained has not been determined but the differences have served as a stimulus for further research especially since the more recent findings disagree with expectation. Some investigators (Zirkel and Moses, 1971; Long, 1969) have suggested that variables such as differing instruments, research design, age groups, religions, times, and definitions have led to the inconsistent findings. There does, however, seem to be a consensus among most writers regarding the relationship between a positive self concept and its effect upon school performance, interpersonal relationships and mental health.

The present study, in some respects, has attempted to replicate many aspects of the Trowbridge, 1972 and Soares and Soares, 1969, and Powers, et al, 1971, studies. The present investigators have, however, sought to extend these previous studies principally by adding another major ethnic group. This study is also tapping a sample of youth from a section of the United States not represented in the earlier studies.

METHOD

The instrument chosen to measure self-concept was the Soares and Soares Inventory (1969). This inventory yields a self image, ideal image, and three reflected self images, peers, parents, and teachers. The scale includes 20 pairs of bipolar adjectives expressed in sentence form with each pair separated by four spaces labeled much like me and little like me on the negative and positive sides. The student indicates how he feels about himself by checking one point on the scale that best describes his feelings. Each item on the scale can be scored either -1 or -2 or +1 or +2 , more positive ratings signify a higher self concept. The respondents were also asked to check off the number of years they would like to continue in school including high school, vocational school, college, and post college as a measure of their educational aspiration.

Although the previous studies all used a relatively standard method of assessing each respondents SES (neighborhood, school district, etc) the present writers believe that it is no longer legitimate to determine SES of children in many large cities today by a classification of schools or neighborhoods because bussing has tended to contaminate school district classifications. Although parent's occupation seems to be one of the more commonly used criteria of SES, the present investigators also found that this can be misleading. It was found that occupational status, or even income, could be influenced by community size, wealth, essential ethnic makeup etc. As an alternative method, the teacher of each individual class sample was asked to indicate what she believed the child's SES to be, based upon her knowledge of the child and his family. The teachers judgement of the child's SES was then combined with the father's occupation and

a judgement was then made by the investigators as to the families SES classification. All data was collected at the end of a normal school year which provided the teachers with ample opportunity to get to know each student and his families position in the community.

While students were completing the self concept inventory, the teacher was completing a form for each subject indicating ethnic origin, SES, and attendance data. Later, IQ and GPA information were obrained from school files.

DATA SOURCE

Data were collected in 14 schools randomly selected throughout the South and Central portions of Texas from both large urban and small city school districts. Twenty-six classrooms in seven school districts yielded a sample of 785 students with approximately equal numbers representing the 8th and 10th grades. The 10th grade was chosen as the highest grade level because it was found that by the 11th and 12th grades, many of the Mexican-American and Black students had already dropped out of school. The 8th grade was used as the lower limit because the present investigators found in a pilot study that students below the 8th grade had extreme difficulty comprehending the correct use of the concept inventory. The original Soares and Soares study was conducted on the 4th through 8th grades.

RESULTS:

An analysis of the data using both a multivariate and univariate analysis of variance design did not support the findings of Soares and Soares and Trowbridge. Table 1 shows the univariate analysis of variance results of combining the five individual self concept scores into one summated

score for each individual respondent. Blacks did show a higher overall self concept than the other two ethnic groups but the difference was not significant. There was, however, a significant difference in overall self concept scores when the group was partitioned by attendance (.01) and grade level (.10). Students with excellent attendance records and older students displayed higher overall concept ratings. Although students with higher SES ratings showed higher overall self concept scores, the difference was not significant.

Each of the five self concept scores yielded by the Soares and Soares scales were examined using multivariate analysis of variance with reference to race, SES, grade level, GPA, attendance record, aspiration level and sex.

Table 2 shows the individual self concept differences when the students were partitioned by race. Black's showed a significantly higher score (.10) on one scale, reflected parents. White respondents had a significantly higher score (.01) on the ideal self concept scale. The test of H_2 for equality of centroids was significant at the .05 level thus showing that there were overall differences between the groups on the five dependent variables.

Table 3 shows significant differences of .10 and .01 for self concept and ideal self concept respectively in favor of whites when the data is partitioned by SES. There were also differences favoring whites on the three reflected scales but they were not significant. The test of H_2 was significant at the .05 level.

Table 4 examines the data with respect to the respondents grade in school. Tenth grade students showed significantly higher self concepts (.10) and ideal self concepts (.01) than eighth grade students. The test of H_2 was not significant.

Table 5 reflects the relationship between self concept and the subject's GPA. Although students with **higher** letter grades generally showed higher self concepts, only the ideal concept scale showed a significant difference (.01). The test of H_2 was significant at the .05 level signifying overall differences on the five dependent variables when the subjects were partitioned by GPA.

Table 6 presents the most significant findings. Students with excellent attendance records showed significantly higher self concepts (.01) on all scales except reflected parents (.10) than those with poor attendance records. The overall test of H_2 was significant at the .05 level.

Table 7 indicates that students who aspire to complete college have the highest self concepts when compared with those who plan to complete high school or vocational school or to stay in college more than 4 years. Vocational school aspirants had the lowest self perception on each of the scales except ideal self. The fact that students who aspired to spend more than 4 years at the college level showed low self concept scores may be a result of the respondents general lack of understanding of post college education. The test of H_2 for overall discrimination was significant at the .10 level.

Table 8 shows that sex is not an important variable in relation to self concept. Males showed only slightly higher self appraisal than females (.10). The test was not significant.

Table 9 presents the significant correlations found when all the major variables examined in this project were intercorrelated. All of the relationships, although they are not strong, are in the direction that would be intuitively expected. Children of darker color have lower SES, lower level of aspiration, and lower grade averages. Children with higher SES

have better attendance records, higher grades and a higher level of aspiration. There were no significant correlations among the self concept inventory scores and race, SES, or grade average.

Table 10 shows the intercorrelation of the five self concept scores and the summated concept score. All of the scales are highly interrelated except scale number 2, ideal self concept.

DISCUSSION

This study had three major purposes. First, an attempt was made to determine if a relationship existed between self concept and ethnic origin. The results showed that there was not a significant difference among the groups on an overall summated self concept measure. White respondents did, however, score significantly higher (.01) on the ideal self concept portion of the scale. Blacks showed the lowest ideal self concept. The project then attempted to determine whether self concept was related to SES. High SES respondents showed the highest summated self concept score although the difference between high and low SES subjects was not significant. Most of the differences between SES groups was found to be centered on the ideal self concept scale and the basic self concept scale. The differences were significant at the .01 and .10 levels respectively with those subjects with the highest SES showing higher ratings. Finally, a group of academically related variables, GPA, grade level, attendence record and aspiration were studied in relation to the self concept measures. Those students with better attendance records showed a significantly (.01) higher summated self concept and on each of the individual concept measures. Tenth graders and those with higher GPA's showed significantly (.01) higher ideal self concept measure.

As a subsequent part of this project, the major independent variables used in this study are intercorrelated. The highest relationship, .42, was found to be between race and SES. An intercorrelation of the five sub-scales on the self concept measure demonstrated a considerable amount of overlap with the exception of the ideal self concept scale.

The most significant findings of this study was its lack of aggreement with several previous projects that showed blacks and lower SES subjects to have higher self concepts. The difference may be explained by changes in sociological conditions since the previous studies were completed or the fact that subjects from a different section of the country were used in this study. The results also showed that the most significant and meaningful relationship was found to be between various self concept ratings and school attendance.

The inconsistencies between this report and others suggest that the entire area of self concept and its relationship and academic variables be investigated on a large scale before any more definite conclusions can be formulated.

TABLE 1

Univariate Analysis of Variance Results for

Combined Self Concept Scores

SOURCE OF VARIATION	M	SD	N	df	AMS	WMS	F	
RACE								
White	121.9	39.39	407					
Mexican	120.9	39.55	164					
Black	126.4	47.65	145	2,713	1,374.8	1,699.6	.81	
SES								
Low	118.2	43.6	239					
Middle	124.0	40.0	433					
High	131.0	39.6	43	2,712	4,267.4	1,702.5	2.51	
GRADE								
8th	119.7	38.7	332					
10th	125.0	43.1	385	1,715	4,995.4	1,691.8	2.95	.10
GPA								
A	129.5	36.7	126					
B	120.7	40.6	130					
C	121.7	43.8	279					
D	120.7	41.1	150	3,681	2,283.6	1,715.7	1.33	
ATTENDANCE								
Poor	111.9	42.6	54					
Average	113.8	45.7	217					
Excellent	128.0	37.9	443	2,711	17,907.6	1,666.5	10.75	.01
ASPIRATION								
High School	121.8	38.8	249					
Vocational	113.4	44.9	48					
College	126.1	38.4	308					
College +	120.7	49.6	89	3,690	2,119.3	1,709.5	1.24	
SEX								
Male	124.2	39.3	419					
Female	119.9	44.0	299	1,716	3,211.7	1,708.6	1.88	

TABLE 2

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Self Concept

Scores Partitioned by Race

SCALES	RACE			POOLED GROUPS EST. S. D.	F 2/713	
	White N=407 Means	Mexican N=164 Means	Black N=145 Means			
Self	22.0	21.8	22.9	9.78	.65	
Ideal	31.5	29.2	28.9	8.48	7.27	.01
Ref. Friends	23.3	23.2	25.0	10.98	1.44	
Ref. Teachers	23.0	23.3	24.7	9.91	1.47	
Ref. Parents	22.1	23.4	24.5	12.83	2.04	.10
H_2, for equality of centroids, Manova 10/∞					3.08	.05

TABLE 3

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Self Concept

Scores Partitioned by S.E.S.

SCALES	S. E. S.			POOLED GROUPS	F 2/712	
	Low N=239 Means	Middle N=433 Means	High N=43 Means	EST. S.D.		
Self	21.1	22.5	24.4	9.76	2.89	.10
Ideal	28.4	31.3	32.5	8.36	10.88	.01
Ref. Friends	23.2	23.7	25.2	11.04	.63	
Ref. Teachers	22.9	23.5	24.8	10.00	.67	
Ref. Parents	22.4	23.0	24.1	12.87	.39	
H_2, for equality of centroids, Manova 10/∞					2.72	.05

TABLE 4

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Self Concept

Scores Partitioned by Grade

SCALES	GRADE		POOLED GROUPS EST. S. D.	F 1.715	
	8 N=332 Means	10 N=385 Means			
Self	21.4	22.7	9.79	3.07	.10
Ideal	29.4	31.3	8.44	8.34	.01
Ref. Friends	23.2	23.9	10.99	.80	
Ref. Teachers	23.1	23.7	9.92	.59	
Ref. Parents	22.5	23.2	12.84	.63	
H_2, for equality of centroids, Manova				5/711	2.02

TABLE 5

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Self Concept

Scores Partitioned by G.P.A.

SCALES	G. P. A.				POOLED GROUPS EST. S.D.	F 3/684	
	A N=126 Means	B N=130 Means	C N=279 Means	D N=150 Means			
Self	23.5	21.9	22.2	20.8	9.85	1.95	
Ideal	33.4	31.0	29.7	29.0	8.36	6.16	.01
Ref. Friends	25.0	23.5	23.0	23.7	11.05	.91	
Ref. Teachers	24.4	23.6	23.5	22.7	9.99	.55	
Ref. Parents	23.1	20.7	23.3	24.1	12.85	1.31	
H_2 , for equality of centroids, Manova 15/∞						2.52	.05

TABLE 6

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Self Concept

Scores Partitioned by Attendance

SCALES	ATTENDANCE			POOLED GROUPS		F 2/711	
	Poor N=54 Means	Average N=217 Means	Excellent N=443 Means	EST.	S.D.		
Self	19.6	19.9	23.6	9.63		12.44	.01
Ideal	29.3	28.6	31.5	8.39		8.77	.01
Ref. Friends	20.9	21.8	24.8	10.95		7.01	.01
Ref. Teachers	21.1	21.7	24.5	9.91		7.75	.01
Ref. Parents	20.2	21.8	23.7	12.84		2.83	.10
H_2 , for equality of centroids Manova 10/∞						3.37	.05

TABLE 7

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Self Concept

Scores Partitioned by Aspiration

SCALES	ASPIRATION				POOLED GROUPS EST. S. D.	F 3/691	
	High School N=250 Means	Vocational N=48 Means	College N=308 Means	College + N=89 Means			
Self	21.7	18.8	22.7	22.8	9.82	2.40	.10
Ideal	29.7	30.1	31.4	29.9	8.45	2.12	.10
Ref. Friends	23.8	19.8	24.2	23.5	11.04	2.22	.10
Ref. Teachers	23.8	20.6	23.7	23.1	10.00	1.53	
Ref. Parents	24.0	21.9	23.0	20.1	12.86	2.16	.10
H_2, for equality of centroids, Manova 15/∞						2.04	.10

TABLE 8

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Self Concept

Scores Partitioned by Sex

SCALES	SEX		POOLED GROUPS EST. S. D.	F 1/716	
	Male N=419 Means	Female N=299 Means			
Self	22.6	21.3	9.81	3.08	.10
Ideal	30.7	29.9	8.47	1.25	
Ref. Friends	24.1	22.9	11.03	1.79	
Ref. Teachers	23.8	22.8	9.99	1.58	
Ref. Parents	23.0	22.6	12.86	.13	
H_2, for equality of centroids, Manova 3/712					.81

TABLE 9

Intercorrelation of Variables Used

In This Project

Variable	Correlation
Race with SES	.42
Race with Aspiration	.22
Race with Grades	.28
SES with Attendance	.28
SES with Grades	.35
SES with Aspiration	.30
Attendance with Grades	.25
Grades with Aspiration	.30

TABLE 10

Intercorrelation of Soars and Soars Self Concept Scores

Variable		Correlations					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Self rating	1.						
Ideal self	2.	.39					
Reflected friends	3.	.68	.43				
Reflected teachers	4.	.65	.39	.76			
Reflected parents	5.	.53	.32	.58	.57		
Combined rating	6.	.82	.6[illegible]	.89	.85	.79	1.00

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